

ASSESSING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE TARABA STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

Danladi Hussaini¹ & Mustapha Saleh Dankishiya²

¹Department of Public Administration, Taraba State University, Jalingo-Nigeria

²Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic Bali-Nigeria

Abstract

The increasing frequency and complexity of disasters in Nigeria present significant challenges to institutional capacity, sustainable development, and human security. Taraba State has faced recurrent disasters, including flooding, communal conflicts, farmer-herder conflicts, windstorms, disease outbreaks, and population displacement, which have intensified humanitarian needs and disrupted socioeconomic activities. This study evaluates the institutional capacity of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA) in managing disasters within Taraba State, Nigeria. Employing a qualitative research design based on documentary analysis, the study relies exclusively on secondary data from credible documentary sources. Thematic content analysis was used for data analysis, and Systems Theory served as the analytical framework to interpret interactions among institutional actors involved in disaster management. The findings indicate that, although TSEMA has established a framework for coordinating disaster preparedness, emergency response, and humanitarian interventions, its operational effectiveness is limited by inadequate funding, restricted logistics, insufficient skilled personnel, weak technological infrastructure, inadequate disaster preparedness mechanisms, and fragmented inter-agency coordination. Furthermore, disaster management in Taraba State remains predominantly reactive, with a greater focus on post-disaster relief than on disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, community resilience, or preventive planning. The study concludes that strengthening disaster governance in Taraba State necessitates a shift from reactive emergency response to proactive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building. Recommendations include increased government investment in institutional capacity, technological modernization, integrated early warning systems, improved stakeholder coordination, community-based disaster risk management, and the integration of disaster risk reduction into development planning.

Keywords: *Disaster Management, Institutional Capacity, Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA), Disaster Governance, Systems Theory, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Disasters, both natural and anthropogenic, constitute significant obstacles to global sustainability. The incidence of natural disasters has risen in numerous countries in recent years. For instance, the 2008 earthquake in Dujiangyan, Sichuan province, China, resulted in over 40,000 individuals reported dead or missing. Hurricane Katrina, which impacted New Orleans and the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005, caused at least 1,300 fatalities and extensive flooding and property damage. In the first half of 2016, earthquakes in Italy resulted in approximately 35 deaths, while in Tanzania, although casualties were limited, many individuals were rendered homeless due to building collapses (Essoh & Abutu, 2018; Rashidfarokhi, 2024).

Africa is one of the regions most severely affected by both anthropogenic and natural disasters, yet it has limited resources for effective disaster response. These disasters disrupt essential services and infrastructure, including communication systems, transportation networks, water

and electricity supplies, housing, healthcare, and educational institutions. The magnitude of these disruptions can hinder national economic development and negatively impact community well-being (Oruonye, Ahmed & Tukura, 2016).

Nigeria, like other nations, faces a range of natural and human-induced disasters. These events may occur suddenly or develop gradually, often resulting in significant loss of life, property damage, and environmental degradation. Disasters in Nigeria include drought, desertification, flooding, epidemics, coastal erosion, dam failures, building collapses, oil spills, maritime accidents, bomb explosions, communal conflicts, fires, aviation accidents, and boat incidents, among others (National Disaster Management Framework, 2024). Human-induced disasters include dam failures, maritime incidents, bomb explosions, population displacement due to conflicts, oil spills, population surges, and aviation accidents. While earthquakes are relatively rare, Nigeria faces persistent challenges from floods, pollution, oil spills, and ethnic tensions, particularly among the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba groups. The country has also experienced numerous aviation disasters. Erosion has destroyed agricultural land and homes in both northern and southern regions, and oil spills have displaced Ijaw fishermen and rendered many farmers unemployed due to ecosystem degradation (Silva, Pereira & Costa, 2025).

Disaster management constitutes a critical component of governance, aimed at protecting populations from the consequences of disasters, damage, threats, and acts of terrorism. This process involves analyzing potential threats and preparing for them to mitigate associated risks. The approach underscores the significance of risk reduction, preparedness for diverse threats, prompt responses to societal challenges, and the implementation of recovery strategies following disasters (Lodhi, 2024).

Government agencies play a vital role during disasters, whether natural or man-made. Each nation carries the sovereign duty to safeguard its populace, infrastructure, and economic and social resources from disasters (Ernest, 2017). The government's role encompasses ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens, as well as their livelihoods and natural resources.

Disaster management and its implementation have become prominent subjects of research and policy discourse in recent years. This increased focus reflects the growing risks faced by populations, who are increasingly vulnerable to various disasters. In Nigeria, the loss of lives and ineffective disaster management have imposed a significant burden on the government. This challenge is exacerbated by the population's limited health and safety knowledge and insufficient disaster avoidance techniques.

Disasters have increasingly become a major challenge for governments and communities worldwide. Natural and human-induced disasters such as floods, droughts, communal conflicts, and displacement crises often result in loss of lives, destruction of property, and disruption of socio-economic activities. In developing countries, the impact of disasters is often more severe due to weak institutional frameworks, limited resources, and inadequate disaster preparedness systems.

Taraba State has experienced a number of disasters over the years, including seasonal flooding, communal conflicts, and population displacement stemming from security challenges. These disasters have had serious humanitarian and economic consequences for communities within the state. The responsibility for coordinating disaster management activities in the state lies with the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA). As the state's primary institution responsible for disaster preparedness and emergency response, the agency is

expected to develop strategies to mitigate disaster risks and provide timely assistance to affected populations.

Despite the establishment of institutional frameworks for disaster management, the effectiveness of disaster management efforts in many Nigerian states remains uncertain. In Taraba State, recurring disaster incidents continue to pose significant challenges for both communities and government institutions responsible for disaster response. It is against this background that this paper evaluates institutional capacity and disaster management in Taraba State by evaluating the nature and trend of disasters prevalent in Taraba State and identifying the key challenges faced by TSEMA in disaster management operations in Taraba State.

The Concept of Disaster

Despite the ubiquitous nature of disasters, their definition has remained shrouded in ambiguity, engendering intellectual uncertainty, analytical confusion, paradigmatic disarray, and theoretical inadequacy. The principal challenges stem from issues of classification, data collection, and the diverse intellectual orientations and affiliations of scholars in the field (Taiwo, 2015). The delineation of 'disaster' is contingent upon the context in which the term is employed (Bang, 2023). A disaster is “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources” (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2005). Worldwide trends indicate that both natural and human-induced disasters are increasing in frequency, intensity, and complexity. According to Nobambela and Yekani (2025), disasters are tragedies that overwhelm our communities, destroy our property, and harm our population. In essence, a disaster is the manifestation of a hazard's impact on society, and the ramifications of a disaster are contingent upon the degree of a community's vulnerability to that hazard.

Concept of Disaster Management

Disaster management encompasses the systematic approach to addressing events that possess the capacity to significantly disrupt the social fabric of a community (Oye & Nathaniel, 2020). It refers to the institutional arrangements, policies, and collaborative mechanisms through which governments and other stakeholders manage disaster risks and respond to emergencies. Effective disaster governance requires coordination among multiple actors, including national governments, local authorities, civil society organizations, and international institutions. Contemporary research suggests that fragmented institutional structures and weak coordination mechanisms often hinder effective disaster management in many developing countries (Okunola, 2025).

According to the United Nations Development Program (2023), disaster management is a framework of policies, administrative decisions, and operational activities essential for preparing for, mitigating, responding to, and remediating the impacts of natural or human-made disasters. Disaster management encompasses a full spectrum of activities pertinent to safeguarding against security threats and natural hazards. Its primary objective is to diminish or avert potential losses from hazards, ensure prompt and appropriate assistance to disaster victims, and facilitate swift and effective recovery (Madugu & Ushama, 2015).

Gomez Rave, Scolobig, and Del Jesus (2025) defined disaster management as a multifaceted policy subsystem encompassing an intergovernmental, multi-phased endeavor to mitigate,

prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. Pragmatically, it encompasses established plans, frameworks, and arrangements that unify the efforts of governmental, voluntary, and private entities in a comprehensive, coordinated manner to address emergency needs, including early prevention, responsive action, and recovery strategies (Hyatt, 2009).

Disaster Management Process

According to Emeribeole (2015) and Okunola (2025), disaster management encompasses a wide range of activities. The essence of disaster management is contingent upon local economic and social conditions. The process of disaster management comprises four critical phases: preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation (Essoh & Abutu, 2018).

Preparedness

Disaster preparedness encompasses proactive measures undertaken in anticipation of calamities to ensure an effective response to their ramifications; prompt, efficient early warning systems; and the evacuation of individuals and assets from at-risk areas (National Disaster Management Framework, 2024). It represents the strategic planning phase of emergency management, in which an agency develops contingency plans to be activated in the event of a disaster. This entails coordinating emergency aid, developing scenarios, establishing monitoring systems, and implementing an early warning system, among others.

Response

This phase of the disaster management process may commence with search-and-rescue operations; however, in all instances, the focus will swiftly transition to addressing the fundamental humanitarian needs of the affected populace (Virtriana, Harto, Atmaja, Meilano, Fauzan, Anggraini, Ihsan, Mustika, & Suminar, 2023). This shift occurs in the aftermath of a disaster that may have inflicted immense human suffering and extensive environmental damage. When an emergency occurs, agencies must initiate the response phase, during which they mobilize resources and implement their strategic plans. This phase encompasses all actions aimed at the outright mitigation of the adverse impacts of both natural and anthropogenic disasters (National Disaster Management Framework, 2024).

Recovery

According to Essoh and Abutu (2018), following a proficient response, agencies may subsequently engage in recovery operations in the aftermath of a disaster. Disaster Recovery encompasses a spectrum of programs, activities, and interventions designed to assist survivors and affected communities in returning to normal while mitigating the risk of future calamities (National Disaster Management Framework, 2024). This phase entails a comprehensive assessment of damages, rehabilitation efforts, environmental restoration, and social and economic reconstruction. Agencies can facilitate post-incident cleanup operations, initiate search-and-rescue missions, and generally aid those impacted in overcoming their psychological distress. Mental health professionals, counselors, and spiritual leaders may be enlisted to provide solace and encouragement to individuals affected by a disaster.

Mitigation

The final phase in disaster management, as articulated by Oviolu and Enakireru (2022), is mitigation, which encompasses proactive measures to prevent the recurrence of disasters. Disaster mitigation refers to strategies designed to minimize the destructive and disruptive impacts of hazards, thereby attenuating their severity (National Disaster Management Framework, 2024). It involves implementing essential provisions to render the region less susceptible to identifiable risks and threats. Mitigation activities may include spatial planning and land-use adjustments, relocating settlements away from hazard-prone areas such as floodplains and storm-prone areas, and establishing and enforcing stringent building codes (Oviolu & Enakireru, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in systems theory, which offers a framework for analyzing disaster management outcomes in Taraba State, particularly in relation to the operations of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA).

Ludwig von Bertalanffy first advanced systems theory, conceptualizing organizations and biological entities as systems composed of interconnected components that function collectively to achieve common objectives. The theory asserts that systems operate through continuous interactions among inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback mechanisms, which enable adaptation to environmental changes (Skyttner, 2017).

Systems theory conceptualizes organizations as open systems that rely on external resources and environmental interactions for survival and effectiveness. Meadows (2008) identifies systems as comprising elements, interconnections, and purposes, which collectively determine system performance. In public sector institutions, these elements encompass administrative structures, human resources, policies, technological infrastructure, and communication channels. The effectiveness of an organization is determined by the interconnections among these elements.

Within disaster management, systems theory offers a valuable framework for analyzing the complex interactions among actors involved in disaster preparedness and response. Disaster management systems typically include multiple stakeholders, such as government agencies, humanitarian organizations, security institutions, local governments, and community groups. Effective disaster management requires coordination and information sharing among these actors within a comprehensive governance system (Singh, Swain, & Mahanandia, 2024).

In Nigeria, disaster management functions within a multi-level institutional framework involving federal, state, and local government entities. At the national level, the National Emergency Management Agency acts as the central coordinating body for disaster preparedness and response. At the state level, agencies such as the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency implement disaster management policies and coordinate disaster response activities within their respective jurisdictions.

From a systems perspective, the effectiveness of disaster management is largely determined by the interactions among these institutions within the broader disaster management system. The availability of resources, communication networks, coordination mechanisms, and institutional cooperation is essential for the overall effectiveness of disaster response systems (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2023; Adediran & Adewumi, 2024).

In this context, systems theory highlights the interconnectedness of institutions, policies, and stakeholders involved in disaster response and risk reduction. Disaster management is best understood as a complex system in which various actors interact within a network of relationships to achieve collective objectives. Within this framework, disaster management institutions serve as interconnected components of a broader governance system that includes government agencies, non-governmental organizations, communities, and international partners. Effective disaster management requires robust coordination mechanisms, information sharing systems, and collaborative networks among these actors.

Despite its analytical value, systems theory has notable limitations. Critics contend that the theory primarily emphasizes structural relationships among institutional components, often neglecting political influences, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and governance challenges that can affect institutional performance. Nevertheless, systems theory remains highly relevant in public administration research, as it offers a framework for understanding the interdependence among institutions responsible for addressing complex societal challenges such as disasters.

Materials and Methods

A qualitative research design utilizing documentary analysis was employed to examine the institutional capacity of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA) in disaster management within Taraba State, Nigeria.

A documentary research approach was deemed appropriate, as the study aimed to synthesize and critically analyze existing documentary evidence related to disaster management practices in Taraba State. The selection of documentary analysis was further justified by the focus on assessing institutional capacity rather than evaluating public perception.

The study relied exclusively on secondary data sourced from authoritative and credible documentary materials relevant to disaster management in Taraba State and Nigeria. These materials were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Thematic analysis is widely utilized in qualitative research as it enables the identification, organization, interpretation, and synthesis of recurring patterns within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Disaster Profile and Trends in Taraba State

Documentary evidence demonstrates that Taraba State has faced a rising frequency and complexity of disasters over the past two decades. Flooding, communal conflicts, farmer-herder conflicts, windstorms, epidemics, and population displacement have emerged as the predominant disaster events. In contrast to states in the arid northern region, where drought is the principal hazard, Taraba's ecological diversity, extensive river systems, mountainous terrain, and heterogeneous ethnic composition expose it to multiple and interconnected disaster risks. As a result, disaster management in the state has expanded beyond emergency relief to include conflict management, humanitarian assistance, environmental management, and the promotion of community resilience.

Flooding is the most recurrent and devastating hazard affecting communities throughout Taraba State. Evidence from NEMA, the National Disaster Management Framework, and humanitarian reports consistently identifies flooding as the primary cause of loss of life, destruction of agricultural production, damage to transportation infrastructure, residential buildings, and public facilities. Communities situated along the Benue River and its tributaries, especially in Ardo Kola, Karim Lamido, Lau, Gassol, Ibi, Wukari, and Jalingo Local

Government Areas, experience seasonal flooding that has intensified due to climate variability, inadequate drainage systems, unregulated settlement along flood plains, and environmental degradation. The persistent occurrence of these floods indicates that disaster risk reduction strategies have not adequately addressed the root causes of vulnerability.

Documentary evidence also indicates that violent conflicts represent a significant source of humanitarian emergencies in Taraba State. Ethno-religious conflicts, communal clashes, and farmer-herder disputes have resulted in substantial internal displacement, loss of livelihoods, and disruption of socioeconomic activities. Unlike sudden-onset natural disasters, conflict-induced emergencies often persist for extended periods and therefore require sustained humanitarian interventions rather than short-term relief. This situation places considerable pressure on TSEMA, which must coordinate humanitarian assistance, temporary shelter, food distribution, and rehabilitation efforts while working with security agencies to restore public order.

The findings further show that the humanitarian impacts of disasters in Taraba State extend well beyond immediate physical destruction. Disasters have led to reduced agricultural productivity, increased food insecurity, higher poverty rates, interruptions in children's education, deteriorating public health, and psychological trauma among affected populations. Communities that experience repeated disasters exhibit declining resilience and growing dependence on governments and humanitarian organizations. As a result, disaster management is now closely linked to broader concerns such as sustainable development, poverty reduction, environmental governance, and human security.

A significant trend identified in the documentary analysis is the increasing interaction between environmental change and socioeconomic vulnerability. Intensified rainfall patterns due to climate variability, combined with rapid urbanization, deforestation, poor land-use planning, and insufficient environmental regulation, have heightened disaster risks. These factors illustrate that disasters in Taraba State are not isolated natural events but result from complex interactions among environmental, institutional, socioeconomic, and governance elements. This observation supports the core principle of Systems Theory, which posits that disasters arise from failures across interconnected systems rather than from single causes.

Institutional Capacity of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA)

The analysis demonstrates that TSEMA has established an institutional framework for coordinating disaster management activities within Taraba State and has remained the principal government agency responsible for disaster preparedness, emergency response, humanitarian assistance, and coordination with national and international partners. The agency's legal mandate is consistent with Nigeria's National Disaster Management Framework, which designates TSEMA as the central coordinating institution for disaster-related interventions within the state. Documentary evidence shows that TSEMA has engaged in emergency relief operations, post-disaster assessments, distribution of relief materials, management of internally displaced persons, and coordination of humanitarian actors during major emergencies.

Despite these institutional responsibilities, the findings indicate that TSEMA's operational capacity is constrained by structural and administrative limitations. Although the agency possesses formal institutional legitimacy, its ability to anticipate, prevent, and manage disasters effectively is significantly affected by the availability of financial resources, logistics, trained personnel, technological infrastructure, and intergovernmental support. As a result, institutional

effectiveness has often varied depending on the magnitude of disasters and the extent of external assistance received from NEMA, development partners, and humanitarian organizations.

Documentary evidence further indicates that disaster preparedness activities are less developed than emergency response operations. Most of TSEMA's documented activities focus on post-disaster interventions, such as relief distribution and humanitarian support, while comparatively limited attention is given to risk mapping, vulnerability assessments, community education, early warning dissemination, and disaster prevention. This imbalance demonstrates a reactive disaster management orientation, rather than the proactive risk reduction approach promoted by international disaster governance frameworks.

Another significant institutional finding relates to coordination. The agency has established collaborative relationships with NEMA, local government authorities, security agencies, health institutions, humanitarian organizations, and community leaders. These collaborations have enhanced emergency response during major disasters by facilitating resource mobilization and information sharing. However, documentary evidence indicates that coordination mechanisms are primarily event-driven, becoming more active during emergencies than during preparedness and mitigation phases. As a result, opportunities for sustained institutional learning and long-term resilience planning are underutilized.

The findings also reveal that institutional learning within TSEMA has gradually improved through repeated disaster experiences. Successive flood disasters and conflict-related emergencies have enhanced operational knowledge in evacuation procedures, humanitarian coordination, relief logistics, and post-disaster recovery planning. However, these improvements have not consistently resulted in comprehensive institutional reforms capable of substantially reducing disaster vulnerability across the state.

Operational Challenges Confronting the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency

Documentary evidence consistently identifies inadequate institutional capacity as the primary constraint on TSEMA's effectiveness in disaster management. While the agency has a clear statutory mandate to coordinate disaster preparedness and emergency response within the state, its operational performance is limited by financial, logistical, administrative, technological, and human resource challenges. These limitations collectively diminish the agency's capacity to anticipate disasters, respond promptly to emergencies, and support long-term recovery efforts. Inadequate funding is among the most frequently documented challenges. Evidence indicates that disaster management remains heavily reliant on government budgetary allocations, which are often insufficient to support comprehensive disaster preparedness, emergency logistics, personnel training, public awareness campaigns, and post-disaster recovery programs. Limited financial resources restrict the agency's ability to procure modern emergency equipment, establish effective early warning systems, maintain emergency stockpiles, and conduct regular disaster simulation exercises. As a result, disaster response often depends on supplementary assistance from NEMA and humanitarian organizations.

Logistics and emergency response infrastructure inadequacies are closely linked to funding constraints. Documentary evidence indicates that TSEMA experiences shortages of specialized rescue equipment, operational vehicles, communication technologies, temporary shelters, emergency medical supplies, and disaster response materials. During widespread flooding and conflict-induced displacement, these deficiencies frequently delay emergency interventions

and reduce the efficiency of humanitarian operations. The increasing frequency and scale of disasters have further highlighted the limitations of existing logistics systems, especially in remote communities with inadequate transportation networks.

The findings also indicate significant human resource challenges. Effective disaster management requires multidisciplinary expertise in emergency planning, environmental risk assessment, humanitarian logistics, public health, engineering, information management, and conflict response. However, documentary evidence shows that disaster management institutions in many Nigerian states continue to face shortages of adequately trained personnel. Limited opportunities for ongoing professional development, specialized disaster management training, and international technical exchange restrict institutional learning and reduce organizational adaptability to emerging disaster risks.

Another major challenge concerns weak disaster preparedness and risk reduction mechanisms. The analysis shows that institutional attention is disproportionately focused on emergency response rather than disaster prevention. While relief distribution receives significant administrative attention after disasters, comparatively fewer resources are allocated to vulnerability assessments, hazard mapping, climate adaptation strategies, environmental regulation, and community-based disaster risk reduction programs. This imbalance perpetuates a reactive disaster management culture, where institutional interventions primarily occur after significant damage has already been inflicted. identifies inadequate public awareness as an important contributor to disaster vulnerability. Many disaster losses result not only from hazard exposure but also from limited public understanding of disaster risks, poor compliance with environmental regulations, settlement within high-risk areas, and inadequate knowledge of emergency response procedures. Although public awareness campaigns have been implemented periodically, they remain insufficiently institutionalized to produce sustained behavioral change across vulnerable communities.

Governance-related challenges also affect institutional performance. Bureaucratic procedures, delays in resource mobilization, overlapping institutional mandates, and inconsistent policy implementation can reduce administrative efficiency during emergencies. Disaster management requires rapid decision-making, flexible resource allocation, and coordinated institutional action. However, conventional bureaucratic structures often impede these operational requirements. The findings suggest that enhancing institutional agility is a critical prerequisite for improving disaster management effectiveness.

Climate change has intensified these operational challenges by increasing the frequency, unpredictability, and severity of weather-related disasters. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, environmental degradation, and increased pressure on natural resources have expanded the range of hazards facing TSEMA and heightened the agency's financial and logistical demands. Therefore, institutional capacity development must increasingly integrate climate adaptation strategies into disaster planning.

Despite these constraints, documentary evidence demonstrates considerable institutional resilience within TSEMA. Repeated disaster experiences have enhanced organizational learning, improved inter-agency collaboration, and expanded partnerships with humanitarian organizations. However, without sustained investments in institutional capacity, disaster governance reforms, and technological modernization, the agency's ability to manage increasingly complex disasters will likely remain limited.

Prospects for Strengthening Disaster Governance in Taraba State

Documentary evidence indicates that, despite persistent institutional and operational challenges in disaster management within Taraba State, there are substantial opportunities to strengthen disaster governance through strategic institutional reforms, enhanced intergovernmental collaboration, technological innovation, and increased community participation. The analysis demonstrates that enhancing disaster management effectiveness necessitates a shift from the current reactive emergency response model to a comprehensive disaster risk reduction framework that emphasizes prevention, preparedness, resilience, and sustainable recovery.

A key opportunity identified is strengthening institutional capacity through sustained government investment. Documentary evidence shows that the effectiveness of disaster management institutions is closely linked to the availability of financial resources, skilled personnel, operational logistics, technological infrastructure, and legislative support. Therefore, increasing budgetary allocations to TSEMA would significantly improve its capacity to procure modern emergency equipment, establish functional emergency operation centres, expand disaster preparedness programmes, and strengthen rapid response capabilities. These investments would decrease reliance on external humanitarian assistance and reinforce institutional autonomy during emergencies.

The findings also indicate that technological advancement offers significant opportunities to enhance disaster preparedness and response in Taraba State. Modern disaster governance increasingly depends on Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, satellite imagery, drone surveillance, digital communication platforms, artificial intelligence, and integrated disaster information management systems for hazard prediction, environmental monitoring, and emergency coordination. However, documentary evidence reveals that these technologies are underutilized within the state's disaster management framework. Incorporating digital technologies into disaster planning would substantially improve hazard mapping, early warning dissemination, evacuation planning, resource deployment, and post-disaster needs assessment.

Another significant opportunity involves institutionalizing community-based disaster risk reduction. The analysis shows that communities frequently serve as first responders during emergencies and possess valuable indigenous knowledge about local environmental conditions, historical disaster patterns, and coping strategies. Traditional rulers, religious institutions, women's groups, youth organizations, and community development associations are therefore essential governance actors whose involvement should extend beyond emergency response to encompass disaster planning, vulnerability assessment, environmental conservation, and public awareness initiatives. Institutionalizing community participation would enhance disaster preparedness and foster local ownership of disaster risk reduction efforts.

The findings underscore the necessity for greater policy integration across government sectors. Disaster management intersects with environmental management, urban planning, agriculture, healthcare, education, climate adaptation, water resources management, and security governance. Documentary evidence suggests that policy fragmentation has at times undermined coordinated responses to complex disasters. Integrating disaster risk reduction into broader development planning would enhance institutional coherence and reduce disaster vulnerability across multiple sectors. This mainstreaming would align Taraba State's disaster governance framework with international best practices, as advocated by the Sendai

Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, collaboration similarly emerges as a critical opportunity for reform. Although TSEMA maintains functional relationships with NEMA and humanitarian organizations, documentary evidence indicates that collaboration can be further strengthened through formal memoranda of understanding, joint simulation exercises, shared disaster databases, integrated communication systems, and periodic multi-agency capacity-building programmes. Strengthening institutional networks would facilitate knowledge exchange, reduce duplication of responsibilities, and improve collective preparedness before disasters occur. From a systems perspective, stronger institutional linkages would increase the adaptive capacity of the entire disaster management system rather than improving individual organizations in isolation.

Climate change adaptation constitutes an increasingly important aspect of future disaster governance. Available evidence shows that changing rainfall patterns, environmental degradation, deforestation, and rapid urbanization are intensifying disaster risks across Taraba State. As a result, future disaster management strategies should incorporate climate resilience measures such as watershed management, afforestation programmes, sustainable land-use planning, floodplain regulation, ecosystem restoration, and climate-sensitive infrastructure development. Integrating environmental sustainability into disaster governance would reduce long-term vulnerability and promote sustainable development.

The findings further suggest that strengthening disaster governance necessitates a shift in institutional philosophy from emergency relief administration to resilience governance. Traditional disaster management approaches have primarily focused on post-disaster response. In contrast, contemporary international best practices emphasize disaster prevention, reducing community vulnerability, enhancing adaptive capacity, and promoting sustainable recovery. Adopting a resilience-oriented approach would enable TSEMA to evolve from a reactive institution into a proactive disaster risk management agency capable of supporting long-term sustainable development in Taraba State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings presented in this paper offer significant insights into the institutional dynamics of disaster management in Taraba State and contribute to the expanding literature that conceptualizes disaster governance as a multidimensional process shaped by institutional capacity, stakeholder collaboration, resource availability, and governance quality. In contrast to studies that primarily interpret disasters as environmental phenomena, the current results demonstrate that disaster outcomes in Taraba State are predominantly influenced by the interplay between natural hazards and institutional preparedness. This perspective aligns with contemporary disaster governance literature, which contends that disasters arise not only from hazard events but also from societal vulnerability and deficiencies in governance structures.

The analysis indicates that flooding remains the most frequent and destructive disaster in Taraba State, while communal conflicts, farmer-herder conflicts, windstorms, and population displacement have emerged as increasingly significant humanitarian emergencies. This observation is consistent with reports from the National Emergency Management Agency and the National Disaster Management Framework, both of which identify flooding as Nigeria's most recurrent natural disaster and highlight the convergence of environmental hazards with conflict-induced humanitarian crises. Oruonye et al. (2016) similarly observed that environmental degradation and inadequate urban planning have heightened flood vulnerability

in various parts of Taraba State. The present study advances this argument by demonstrating that disaster frequency is further exacerbated by institutional limitations that constrain government agencies' capacity to implement preventive interventions.

The study further establishes that TSEMA holds an institutional mandate that positions it to coordinate disaster management within the state. However, the agency's effectiveness is limited by financial constraints, inadequate logistics, insufficient technical capacity, shortages of trained personnel, and weak technological infrastructure. These findings corroborate previous studies by Essoh and Abutu (2018), Oye and Nathaniel (2020), and Okunola (2025), which concluded that inadequate institutional capacity is a major barrier to effective disaster management in many developing countries. The present study provides additional evidence that statutory authority alone does not ensure institutional effectiveness. Instead, institutional performance is contingent upon resource availability, administrative flexibility, organizational learning, and sustained government commitment.

A further significant finding relates to inter-agency collaboration. Documentary evidence shows that cooperation among TSEMA, NEMA, humanitarian organizations, security agencies, local governments, and community institutions has enhanced emergency response during major disasters. However, the findings also indicate that institutional collaboration is predominantly reactive, intensifying during emergencies but diminishing during preparedness and mitigation phases. This pattern supports Systems Theory, which posits that organizational performance relies on continuous interaction among system components rather than episodic cooperation. The findings suggest that institutional effectiveness could be substantially improved through permanent coordination mechanisms, joint planning processes, integrated information systems, and ongoing stakeholder engagement.

The findings also demonstrate that disaster governance in Taraba State remains primarily response-oriented rather than prevention-focused. While significant effort is allocated to emergency relief distribution after disasters, comparatively little institutional attention is directed toward vulnerability reduction, hazard mapping, environmental regulation, early warning systems, and community resilience. This trend aligns with international scholarship, which contends that many developing countries continue to prioritize disaster response over disaster risk reduction, despite the considerable long-term benefits of preventive interventions. As a result, disaster losses persist because the underlying drivers of vulnerability are insufficiently addressed.

Conclusion

This study evaluated the institutional capacity of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (TSEMA) in disaster management within Taraba State, Nigeria, utilizing documentary evidence and Systems Theory as the analytical framework. The results indicate that disasters in Taraba State are increasingly frequent, multidimensional, and complex. Flooding, communal conflicts, farmer-herder conflicts, windstorms, disease outbreaks, and population displacement represent the primary humanitarian challenges facing the state. These disasters have imposed substantial social, economic, environmental, and developmental costs on affected communities, underscoring the strategic importance of effective disaster governance.

The study concludes that enhancing disaster management in Taraba State necessitates a strategic shift from a reactive emergency response model to a proactive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building framework. Achieving this transformation requires sustained political

commitment, increased investment in institutional capacity, improved inter-agency coordination, technological modernization, strengthened community participation, and greater integration of disaster risk reduction into broader development planning. Addressing these institutional challenges will enable TSEMA to more effectively fulfill its statutory mandate and contribute to sustainable development, human security, and disaster resilience in Taraba State.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations aim to enhance disaster governance and increase the operational effectiveness of the Taraba State Emergency Management Agency.

- a. The government should shift disaster management policy from a primarily reactive emergency response approach to a proactive disaster risk reduction strategy. Priority should be given to vulnerability mapping, hazard assessment, floodplain management, environmental conservation, climate adaptation, and disaster prevention programs.
- b. Formal coordination mechanisms should be established among TSEMA, NEMA, local government authorities, security agencies, healthcare institutions, environmental agencies, humanitarian organizations, and development partners.
- c. Communities should be systematically integrated into disaster governance through Community Disaster Management Committees that include traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth associations, women's groups, farmers' organizations, and civil society organizations.
- d. TSEMA should create a dedicated Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit tasked with documenting disaster events, assessing institutional performance, maintaining disaster databases, conducting post-disaster evaluations, and supporting evidence-based policy development.

References

- Adediran, A., & Adewumi, O. (2024). Systems theory and safety management in public facilities in Nigeria. *African Journal of Environment and Natural Science Research*, 8(4), 1–12.
- Aliyu, A. (2015). Disaster management and emergency response strategies in developing countries. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Management*, 7(2), 45–56.
- Anthony, N. E., Agetu, F. N., & Obuseh, R. (2019). An overview of emergency preparedness, response, and disaster management in Nigeria: A study of NEMA. World Educators Forum: *An International Journal*, 11(1), 1–20.
- Bang, H. (2023). Strengthening disaster management discourse: An evaluation of disaster education in Africa's regional platforms for disaster risk reduction. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(3), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.47604/ajep.2030>
- Boin, A., Lodge, M., & Rhinard, M. (2021). Governing the pandemic: The politics of navigating a mega-crisis. *Springer Nature*.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). *Document analysis as a qualitative research method*. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2021). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

- Ernest, U. C. (2017). Government responsibilities and disaster management in developing economies. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 6(1), 77–89.
- Godwin, O. E., & Paul, O. A. (2018). Emergency response systems and disaster management practices in developing countries. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*, 10(3), 38–46.
- Gómez Rave, D. V., Scolobig, A., & Del Jesús, M. (2025). Rethinking preparedness for coastal compound flooding: Insights from a systematic review. *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences*, 25, 3977–3995.
- Lodhi, S. (2024). Institutional architecture and governance challenges in disaster risk management authorities. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 13(3), 8–18.
- Meadows, D. H. (2008). *Thinking in systems: A primer*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Nobambela, A., & Yekani, B. (2025). Complexity and effectiveness in disaster risk management within local municipalities. *Journal of Local Government Research and Innovation*, 6, Article 269. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jolgri.v6i0.269>
- Okunola, O. H. (2025). Beyond institutional silos: Rethinking multilevel disaster risk governance in Africa a decade into the Sendai Framework implementation. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 16, 321–332.
- Oruonye, E. D., Ahmed, Y. M., & Tukura, E. (2016). Strengthening capacity building for disaster management in Taraba State: A panacea for sustainable development. *International Journal of Development Research*, 6(3), 7206–7213.
- Rashidfarokhi, A. (2024). Resilience by whom and for whom? Empowering local communities for community-led resilience building. *Real Estate and Sustainable Crisis Management in Urban Environments*, 39, 45–58.
- Rashidfarokhi, A., & Fekete, A. (2024). Institutional resilience and disaster governance: How countries respond to Black Swan events. *Progress in Disaster Science*, 21, 100329.
- Skyttner, L. (2017). *General systems theory: Problems, perspectives, practice* (2nd ed.). World Scientific.
- Silva, M., Pereira, R., & Costa, H. (2025). Implementation challenges of disaster risk management policies: The organizational capacities of municipal civil defense units. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 119, 105291.
- Singh, S. B., Swain, G., & Mahanandia, B. (2024). Role of local governance in disaster management: A systematic review. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(2), 444–457.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). *Human Development Report 2023/2024*. UNDP.
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2005). *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015*. UNDRR.
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2023). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023*. UNDRR.
- Virtriana, R., Harto, A. B., Atmaja, F. W., Meilano, I., Fauzan, K. N., Anggraini, T. S., Ihsan, K. T. N., Mustika, F. C., & Suminar, W. (2023). Machine learning remote sensing using the random forest classifier to detect building damage caused by the Anak Krakatau volcano tsunami. *Geomatics, Natural Hazards and Risk*, 14, 28–51.